

sign of a mild winter was the occurrence of several Blue Grosbeaks along the upper S.P.R., all near Hereford, and perhaps referring to the same individuals; a female was seen 5 Dec (GHR), two males were seen 12 Feb (DK), and a male and a female were there 24 Feb (S. Turner). A stunning bird was an apparent hybrid male N. Cardinal × Pyrrhuloxia photographed at Patagonia L. 10 Jan (ph. JLD, L. Sansone); details of this rare combination will be published elsewhere.

A male Hooded Oriole, casual at best anywhere in s. Arizona during the winter, was at the B.T.A. 17 Jan (CT). More expected during winter, but still considered casual, were the Scott's Orioles at Portal 16 Dec+ (S. Spofford, DJ), the Santa Rita Lodge in Madera Canyon

22 Dec (*fide* MS), Sycamore Canyon 28 Dec (M. Gors), and Agua Caliente Park, Tucson, 17 Jan–22 Feb (MS). For at least the third year in a row, Bronzed Cowbirds have been found wintering in the Mohawk Valley, with three birds at Wellton 18 Jan (PL). A female Red Crossbill on a nest at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon 7 Feb (CTL) was of interest, as the timing of breeding in Arizona is mostly a mystery. It was a particularly good Lawrence's Goldfinch year, with numerous birds found at a variety of locations from the Phoenix region south; even during good years (although likely bad for the birds themselves), numbers seem greatly reduced as compared to invasion years from the 1970s and 1980s.

#### Contributors (area compilers in bold face):

Charles Babbitt, Jack Bartley, Chris Benesh, Ron Bimrose, Ken Bielek, Ned Boyajian, Hank Brodtkin, Dale Clark, Troy Corman, Alan Craig, Jon L. Dunn, Richard Ditch, Steve Ganley, Caleb Gordon, **Jay Hand** (Tucson), Rich Hoyer, **Dave Jasper** (Portal), Roy Jones, Kenn Kaufman, Ken Kertell (KKe), **Dave Krueper** (Sierra Vista), **Chuck T. LaRue** (n. Arizona), Paul Lehman, Steve Mlodinow, Narca Moore-Craig, Richard Palmer, Roger Radd, Gary Rosenberg, Andy Spencer, John Spencer, Dave Stejskal, **Mark Stevenson** (Tucson), Bob Thomen, **Carl Tomoff** (Prescott), Jack Whetstone, **Janet Witzeman** (Phoenix), Robert Witzeman.



# new mexico



#### LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

A **Yellow-billed Loon** at Cochiti L. 15–26 Feb (WW et al., ph. JO) was New Mexico's 10th in 10 years. Single Pac. Loons were at Conchas L. 9 Feb (WH) and Brantley L. 18 Jan (CR); a dead Pacific at E.B.L. was being recycled by a gull 2 Feb (WW). South was a Horned Grebe at Burn L., Las Cruces, 18 Dec–9 Jan (v.o.); high counts were five Horneds at Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW) and four at Brantley L. 29 Dec (JD, JO). A **Red-necked Grebe** at Farmington L. 11–23 Dec (ph. TR) provided only the 3rd confirmed state record, but was the second for that locale. One–two Am. Bitterns at B.L.N.W.R. 18 Dec–4 Feb (GW, SB) were the only ones found. Small numbers of Great Egrets overwintered at Bosque N.W.R. and B.L.N.W.R., but Snowy Egrets were unreported after late Dec. Late were four Cattle Egrets at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Dec (SC), where one remained into Feb (v.o., ph. BZ). Seven–eight White-faced Ibises also overwintered at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Dec–12 Feb (v.o., ph. BZ) and another remained at B.L.N.W.R. (GW). Very early was a Turkey Vulture near Las Cruces 18 Feb (SB).

With about 12,000 of each, Ross's Geese equaled Snow Geese at B.L.N.W.R. 3 Dec (GW); some 25,000 Snows were at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Dec (SC). To protect Arctic breeding grounds from these "light geese," it truly became open season on them in New Mexico 1 Feb, complete with no daily bag or possession limits, unplugged shotguns and electronic calls approved, and shooting hours extended to before sunrise and after sunset! Four Tundra Swans found their way

to the Bernardo-La Joya area by Dec, but only one survived the experience. Although it is illegal to hunt swans in New Mexico, one was shot 19 Dec and two others were bagged 7 Jan (*fide* T. Mitchusson); the survivor was last seen 28 Jan (JP). Wandering Wood Ducks included singles at Zuni 18 Dec–8 Jan (ph. DC), Lake Valley, Sierra, 25 Dec (CR), and the Animas Valley 4 Jan (JD), and two were at Deming 3 & 30 Dec (LM, JD, JO); noteworthy were 10 at Española 19 Dec (BF). Cinnamon Teal are irregular in winter, so Jan reports of 1–2 at Zuni (DC), R.G.N.C. (MS, JZ, JO), Bosque Redondo (NV), Bosque N.W.R. (v.o.), and B.L.N.W.R. (GW) were noteworthy. A Blue-winged Teal was at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Dec (D. Hawksworth) and 9 Jan (JO). One-four Greater Scaup were at six locales from the R.G.V. east (v.o.); west were four males at Farmington L. 21 Feb (TR). Unusual for the far sw. was a Com. Goldeneye at Hurley 8–26 Jan (EL, LM).

#### OSPREYS THROUGH OWLS

Presumably early were two Ospreys at E.B.L. 1 Feb (WW). White-tailed Kites continued to tantalize, with two in the Uvas Valley 4 Feb (ph. JO) and singles in the Animas Valley 4 Dec (*fide* RS) and 20 Jan (AC, NMC) and in the R.G.V. near Garfield 18 Jan (R. Rasmussen). A dark *Buteo* at Cliff 3 Dec was carefully described as a Zone-tailed by one observer and, independently, as a Harlan's Hawk by another observer; nicely documented was a Harlan's near Anthony 6 Dec (ph. BZ) and 22 Jan (MS, JZ). Many Ferruginous Hawks winter at large prairie dog colonies near Janos, n. Chihuahua, where 21 were counted 18 Dec (C. Melcher). One–two Rough-legged Hawks were s. to the Animas Valley 4 & 20 Jan (JD, NMC, AC), Mesilla Valley 22 Jan (MS, JZ), and Dripping Springs 18 Dec (GE). Merlins were especially numer-

#### Sartor O. Williams III

65 Verano Loop  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505  
(sowilliams@state.nm.us)

**A**nother dry and mild winter allowed many birds to linger late, overwinter north of usual, and/or return early, all the while rearranging conventional wisdom as to the status of several species. The season was notable for unprecedented numbers of wintering sparrows, these apparently responding to abundant grasses and mild conditions, especially in south-central and southwestern New Mexico.

**Abbreviations:** B.L.N.W.R. (*Bitter Lake N.W.R.*); Bosque N.W.R. (*Bosque del Apache N.W.R.*); E.B.L. (*Elephant Butte Lake*); R.G.N.C. (*Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); R.S. (*Rattlesnake Springs, Eddy*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

ous and widespread Dec–Feb, including n. to Farmington (TR) and Maxwell N.W.R. (JD, JO), and e. to Clayton (CR) and Clovis (JO); 1–7 were on 12 CBCs. A few Peregrine Falcons lingered, including one n. to Questa 19 Dec (RW), but the season's last was at Bosque N.W.R. 29 Dec (PS).

A Chukar in Albuquerque's South Valley 13 Feb (DE, BN) was almost certainly an escape. Encouraging were 17 Gould's Wild Turkeys on lower Deer Cr., Animas Mts., 7 Dec (G. Schmitt). Unusually far n. for winter were two Virginia Rails at Clayton L. 28–29 Dec (DE, CR), and singles at Las Vegas 2 Jan (GB) and at 6600 ft. at Quarai 13 & 25 Jan (HS). Also n. for the season was a Com. Moorhen at Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW) and 26 Feb (DE, CR). Very early was an Am. Avocet at Bosque N.W.R. 11 Feb (DE); the earliest Black-necked Stilt was at Lordsburg 19 Feb (LM). Late Spotted Sandpipers were singles at Corrales 12 Dec (WH) and Sevilleta N.W.R. 23 Dec (SC). Surprising were four Long-billed Curlews at Moriarty 15 Jan (JO). Late Dunlins numbered one at B.L.N.W.R. 18 Dec (GW) and three at Loving 30 Dec ((SW)); early were three at Bosque N.W.R. 4 Feb (LM), where there were four 11–12 Feb (DE, WH). Most unusual for winter were 1–2 Stilt Sandpipers at B.L.N.W.R. 29 Dec (JD, JO) and 4 Jan (GW).

Noteworthy for mid-winter were six Bonaparte's Gulls at B.L.N.W.R. Jan 14 (GW). Single ad. **Mew Gulls** were at Conchas L. 28 Dec (JD, ph. JO) and E.B.L. 1–20 Jan (DE, BN, JP, ph. JO). A Thayer's Gull at E.B.L. 1 Jan (DE, BN) was the only reported. Highs for Eur. Collared-Doves were six at Ft. Sumner 8 Feb (WW) and 97(!) at Roswell 18 Dec (SB); nicely documented was one at Albuquerque 18–19 Dec (vt. R. Adair). White-winged Doves continued to thrive in the s., including 366 at Roswell (SB) and a mere 17,614 at Las Cruces (GE) 18 Dec, and to overwinter in the n. (Santa Fe, Fort Sumner) and sw. (Redrock, Silver City, Deming). Noteworthy was an Inca Dove at Hillsboro 15 Jan (MS, JZ). A Com. Ground-Dove at Mesilla 31 Dec–9 Jan (JO, JD, JP, CR) provided the only report, but **Ruddy Ground-Doves** numbered two each at Deming, 4 Dec–7 Jan (LM, CR, JP, ph. JO) and Mangas 21 Dec (RF). Long-eared Owls seen where normally rare included two in the Animas Valley 1 Jan (AC) and one in the Tres Hermanas Mts. 24 Jan (LM). Short-eared Owls made a relatively good showing, with singles at Stinking L. 20 Jan (D. Stahlecker), Sevilleta N.W.R. 21 Dec (SC), and near Columbus 20 Dec (LM), plus two n. of Hachita 30 Dec (JD, JO).

## SWIFTS THROUGH BUSHTITS

The climate proved suitable for White-throated Swifts, with 480 at Las Cruces 18 Dec (GE) and 10 at E.B.L. 19 Dec (JO); at least 40 were at Mesilla Dam 8 Jan (JP, JO, GE). A few hummingbirds lingered, but details were scant or lacking. Two Magnificents were at Pinos Altos 18 Dec (*fide* RS) and a probable Black-chinned was at Las Cruces through 4 Jan (GE). A male Anna's was at Albuquerque 6–19 Dec (HS) and two were reported at Las Cruces 18 Dec (GE), while 1–2 *Selasphorus* were at Silver City (*fide* RS) and Las Cruces (*fide* GE) 18 Dec.

A Lewis's Woodpecker wandered e. to Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW) and 24 Dec (JD, JO). West was a Red-headed Woodpecker at Mesilla 6 Dec–8 Jan (v.o., ph. BZ, JO). Two Gila Woodpeckers in Skull Canyon, Peloncillo Mts., 1 Jan (*fide* AC) established a new locality record. Late were two Williamson's Sapsuckers at Eldorado near Santa Fe 4–10 Jan (BF, DF). Single apparent Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers—most described as immatures—were at 13 sites from the R.G.V. eastward (v.o.); w. was one at Hillsboro 18 Dec (MS, JZ). Unusual was a Red-naped Sapsucker at Zuni 19 Dec (JT). Two Ladder-backed Woodpeckers in Bluewater Canyon 18 Dec (CR) furnished a rare Zuni Mts. record. Hairy Woodpeckers were conspicuous in the lower R.G.V., including 5–6 at Percha 12 Dec–15 Jan (JO, JP, ph. BZ). The McGaffey Burn in the Zuni Mts. continued dependable for Three-toed Woodpeckers, including two 27 Dec (JD, vt. JO). As usual, 1–2 hybrid flickers were at several locales from Clayton w. to Zuni and s. to Caballo (v.o.); one at Las Cruces was labeled a "Gilded" (*fide* GE).

Single *Empidonax* were at Socorro 28 Feb (PB) and near Riverside 17 Jan–25 Feb (RS); singles reported as Duskiess were at Bosque N.W.R. 17 Jan (JP), E.B.L. 12 Dec–15 Jan (JO, JP), and Mesilla 18 & 31 Dec (JO, JD). In the n., Black Phoebe's lingered at Dixon 18 Dec (RW) and Española 19 Dec (BF), while early were singles at Peña Blanca and Cochiti Dam 19 Feb (CR); noteworthy were three at Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW). Eastern Phoebe's were conspicuous from the R.G.V. eastward, with highs of five at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Dec (SC) and two each at R.S. 18 & 30 Dec (SW, JD, JO) and Loving 30 Dec (SW); far w. were singles at Redrock 19 Feb (LM, RS) and the Animas Valley 18 Dec–3 Jan (AC, NMC, JD, ph. JO). Late Say's Phoebe's were three at Farmington 18 Dec (AN), two at Las Vegas 2 Jan (GB), and one at Zuni 31 Dec (DC). Noteworthy for the R.G.V. were single Vermilion Flycatchers at Palomas 2 Jan (GE) and Percha 2–15 Jan (J. Paton, JP, ph. BZ).

Another good season for N. Shrikes found individuals at 19 sites, including s. to Bosque N.W.R. 30 Dec–18 Jan (v.o.), Mountainair 15 Jan (ph. JO), and near Clovis through 23 Dec (ph. JL). Lingered from Nov was a Bell's Vireo at Caballo Dam 11 Dec (JP, JO). Far w. was a Blue Jay at Cliff 1 Jan (*fide* RS); highs in the R.G.V. were five at Española 19 Dec (BF), 13 at Santa Fe 26 Dec (PI), and four at Socorro Jan–Feb (PB, J. Shipman). Seven Black-billed Magpies were at Albuquerque 19 Dec (HS); one was in the South Valley there 27 Feb (BV), where breeding is known. The earliest Tree Swallows were 20 at Bernardo (JO) and 6–8 at Bosque N.W.R. (DE, BN) 18 Feb. Late was a N. Rough-winged Swallow at Caballo Dam 2 Jan (WH, MS, JZ). Single Verdins were n. to Mangas 16 Dec–1 Jan (RF) and Socorro 15 Jan (JP) and 20 Feb (JO), exceptional were three at Sevilleta N.W.R. 23 Dec (SC). Far e. were 20 Bushtits at Portales 2–18 Dec (G. Pfaffenberger).

## WRENS THROUGH WARBLERS

Enjoying the mild winter was a singing Canyon Wren at Petroglyph N.M. 12 Jan (NV). Continuing their R.G.V. colonization saga, a singing **Carolina Wren** was at Los Lunas 22 & 29 Jan (JO, JP) and two persisted at Socorro 29 Jan (DE); in the se., one at R S since Aug was documented 29 Dec (JD, ph. JO). Unusual were 10 Bewick's Wrens at Clayton 29 Dec (CR); another was in ne *Union* Dec–Feb (LF). House Wrens are irregular in winter, but this season produced several on Dec CBCs; Jan records included one at Las Vegas 2 Jan (GB), four in the Caballo area 2 Jan (BZ), and one at Lake Valley 25 Jan (CR). Winter Wrens staged an unprecedented "invasion," with individuals at Santa Fe (PI), Peña Blanca (WW), Zuni (JT), Bluewater (CR), Bosque Redondo (CR), Bernardo (BV), E B L (JO, JP), Las Animas Cr. (DE, BN), and Ruidoso (CR), plus 1–2 in the Animas Valley 1–22 Jan (v.o.); the hotspot was Corrales, with 1–2 19 Dec–26 Feb (v.o., ph. JO, M. Martin) and five there 13 Feb (NV).

Following the autumn influx, Golden-crowned Kinglets continued in evidence, including 1–3 in submontane areas e to Clayton L. 29 Dec (LF, CR) and Sumner Dam 26 Feb (CR) and s. to Caballo Dam 11 Dec (JP, JO) and 2 Jan (MS, WH) and R.S. 29 Dec (JO, SO); noteworthy were four at Quarai 13 and 25 Jan (HS) and 20 at Bluewater 28 Dec (BP). Lingered Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were three at Sevilleta N.W.R. 21 Dec (SC), two at Caballo Dam 2 Jan (WH, MS, JZ), and singles at E.B.L. 12 Dec and 1 Jan (JO, DE, BN), and Percha 17 Dec (JP). Eastern Bluebirds were conspicuous throughout the Rio Grande, Pecos, and Canadian Valleys (v.o.); w. were one

at Zuni 8 Jan (DC) and six at Deming 11 Dec (JP, JO) Mountain Bluebirds were abundant in much of New Mexico; some 2900, but only four Westerns, were near Claunch 11–14 Jan (CR) At Silver City there were 710 Westerns, but only four Mountains, 18 Dec (RS). Two Hermit Thrushes lingered at Zuni 27 Dec (DC) On the heels of a Nov record at Fruitland, **Varied Thrushes** continued to make news with one at Aztec 18–27 Dec (J. Rees, JD, JO, ph. TR) and another at Socorro 11 Jan–20 Feb (WW et al., ph. JO). Unusual for the n. were single N. Mockingbirds at Clayton 1 Jan (*vide* LF) and Las Vegas 2 Jan (GB) and two at Dixon 18 Dec (RW). One-two Brown Thrashers were at eight locales from the R.G.V. east, including singles at Corrales 15 Dec–13 Feb (ph. WH) and Socorro 17–18 Jan (PB). Curve-billed Thrashers continued in residence at Eldorado near Santa Fe (BF, DF, G&CJ), where one was singing 7 Feb (SOW). A Crissal was at Eldorado 6 Dec (G&CJ) and one was singing at Albuquerque 14 Jan (PS); remarkably early was a Crissal nest with two young at Petroglyph N.M. 27 Feb (HS). Moderate-to-large numbers of Cedar Waxwings were present through Dec, but none were reported 6 Jan–5 Feb; early were 30 at Taos 8 Feb (RW), 40 at Cerrillos 22 Feb (AF), and 63 at Santa Rosa 26 Feb (CR).

Evidence that some Olive Warblers overwinter in New Mexico was provided by one at Bear Mt. near Silver City 18 Dec (RS) and 17 Jan (B Wilcox). January Orange-crowned Warblers included singles at Percha 2 & 8 Jan (BZ) and Deming 28 Jan (JO) plus 1–3 at Mesilla 8–9 Jan (JO, CR); reports of several dozen at Las Cruces in Dec await substantiation Surprising was a male N. Parula at Los Alamos 12 Dec (M. MacRoberts), as was a cooperative **Ovenbird** at Albuquerque mid-Dec–Feb (HS, PS, BV, ph. JO, R. Waitz). Single Black-and-white Warblers were at Percha 15 Jan (JP) and Las Cruces 18 Dec (H. Harrison). Common Yellowthroats wintering n. in the R G V, included one at Bernardo 29 Jan (DE) and two at Bosque N.W.R. 10 Jan (BZ).

### SPARROWS

Cassin's Sparrows are difficult to locate—and identify—in winter; this season produced possible single Cassin's at Sevilleta N.W.R. 21 & 23 Dec (J. Place) and Lake Valley 25 Jan (CR), 11 were reported on the Peloncillo CBC 1 Jan (AC). American Tree Sparrows on their s frontier were two each at Chaco Canyon 11 Jan (H. Smith) and Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW), with singles at Albuquerque 12 Dec (CR) and Sevilleta N.W.R. 23 Dec (SC). Chipping Sparrows wintered in the sw. in sizable numbers, including 211 at Caballo 2 Jan

(BZ), 1141 in the Gila Valley 1 Jan (RS), 1285 at Silver City 18 Dec (RS), and a record 2369 in the Peloncillo area 1 Jan (AC); smaller numbers were found farther n., including one at Española 19 Dec (BF), 12 at Albuquerque 26 Dec (WH), and two in the Sandia Mts. 23 Jan (BV).

Brewer's Sparrows were spectacularly abundant in the sw. and were especially conspicuous n. to the Gila Valley, Silver City, and Albuquerque, and e. to Caballo and Las Cruces; the 13,462 Brewer's on the Peloncillo CBC 1 Jan (AC) established a national record. Carefully detailed among the thousands of Brewer's were single Clay-colored Sparrows in the Animas Valley 1 Jan (JD) and 20 Jan (NMC); undetailed reports of large numbers of Clay-colored elsewhere remain to be confirmed and may refer to other species. Perhaps seeking grassier pastures, Field Sparrows pushed w. of usual, including two at Sumner L. 8 Feb (WW) and singles at Santa Rosa L. 19 Dec (WW), R.G.N.C. 20 Feb (banded N. Cox), Bernardo 19 Jan–18 Feb (JO, JP, DE, BN), and Animas Valley 20 Jan (NMC). Although numbering "only" in the hundreds or thousands (rather than tens of thousands), Vesper and Savannah Sparrows and Lark Buntings likewise made their presence known in the sw. Nine Lark Sparrows on the Peloncillo CBC 1 Jan (AC) established a new record. The Animas Valley grasslands produced the only Grasshopper Sparrows, with eight 1 Jan (AC), and the only Baird's Sparrows, with singles 1 Jan (CR) and 4 Jan (JD). Fox Sparrows were at 10 locales and were most numerous in the Gila and Rio Grande Valleys; noteworthy were singles in n. *Roosevelt* 12 Feb (ph. JO) and Tyrone 16 Jan (EL) and two on Macho Cr. near Nutt 26 Jan (CR). Lincoln's Sparrows were widespread in the sw., including 58 at Lake Valley 25 Jan (CR); lingering were two at Zuni (JT) and one at Santa Rosa (WW) 19 Dec. Swamp Sparrows were widely reported, including one-three w. to Silver City and the Animas Valley; 1–9 were on 14 CBCs, including n. to Zuni, Bluewater, Albuquerque, Las Vegas, Santa Rosa, and Roswell. White-throated Sparrows had an exceptional season, with numerous records in the s. and others n. to Farmington, Crown Pt., Bluewater, Española, Santa Fe, and Bosque Redondo in late Dec; notable were five at Peña Blanca 19 Feb (CR), three in the Sandia Mts. 2 Jan (CR), and one at Quarai 13 Jan (HS). Highly unusual for winter were single dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows at Blanco 29 Jan (ph. TR), a *San Juan* winter first, and at Bosque N.W.R. 18 Feb (BN). Other *Zonotrichia* in evidence were single Harris's at Corrales 19 Dec–23 Jan (v.o.), Alameda 19

Dec (T. Brownell), Las Vegas 2 Jan (GB), and s. *Curry* 19–26 Dec (ph. JL), and single Golden-crowneds near Socorro 18 Jan (WW) and 18 & 24 Feb (DE, BN, JO), and at Post Office Canyon 28 Dec (banded R. Scholes). Of the three longspur species known for New Mexico, Lapland is the scarcest; this season produced several Laplands from the ne. as well as one w. to Los Lunas 10 & 23 Jan (BZ, DE) and 1–2 at E.B.L. 11–12 Dec (JP, ph. JO).

### CARDINALS THROUGH FINCHES

Northerly N. Cardinals were two each at Santa Rosa 26 Feb (CR) and Macho Cr. 26 Jan (CU). Northerly Pyrrhuloxias included singles at Cerrillos, *Santa Fe*, 18 Feb and later (AF), Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW), and Summer Dam 26 Feb (CR) plus 1–2 at Bosque Redondo 24 Dec–16 Jan (JD, JO, NV). Very late was a male Lazuli Bunting at Socorro 12 Dec (PB). Eastern Meadowlarks wintered n. to Albuquerque's West Mesa, with one 19 Dec (NV), three 20 Jan (WH), and two singing 27 Feb (BV). The three **Rusty Blackbirds** at Bosque N.W.R. 12 Dec (JO) were likely Nov holdovers; far w. was a male in the Animas Valley 1 Jan (JD, ph. JO). The winter status of Com. Grackles in New Mexico is complicated by confusion with Great-taileds and by lackadaisical reporting; notably n. were  $\leq 16$  at Clayton 29 Dec–2 Jan (CR, W. Cook) and one at Percha 9 Jan (DE, BN), while one at Ft. Sumner 26 Feb (CR) was presumably early. Three–four Bronzed Cowbirds at Las Cruces 18 Dec and 8 Jan (ph. JO) furnished the only report. Remarkable for the season were 459 Brown-headed at Clayton 29 Dec (CR), while one at Albuquerque 27 Feb (BV) was early.

Certainly unexpected was an apparent ad. male **Bullock's Oriole** described from Montoya, *Quay*, 8 Jan (O. Kolkmann). Rosy-Finches caused excitement at Sandia Crest, where a mixed flock of some 80 Blacks, Gray-crowneds, and Brown-cappeds were present 5 Dec–21 Jan (DE, CR et al.); opinions varied sharply on species proportions. Another flock at Taos Ski Valley 26 Dec (JD, JO) contained 60 Blacks, 10 Brown-cappeds, and two Gray-crowneds (including one Hepburn's). The few Red Crossbills were restricted to the Zuni and Sandia Mts. Pine Siskins were relatively common in the w. but were scarce in other areas, including Albuquerque; nevertheless, moderate numbers were on 13 CBCs. Lesser Goldfinches normally are replaced by Am. Goldfinches in winter in New Mexico, but this season found Lessers overwintering in larger numbers and farther n. than usual, including up to 10 at Corrales all winter (WH et al.) and one at

Eldorado 2 Jan–3 Feb (BF, DF); Lessers were on 13 CBCs n. to Farmington, Española, Santa Fe, and Las Vegas, and they outnumbered Americans at Caballo, Las Cruces and the Peloncillo Mts. A bright male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at Caballo Dam 4 Feb (LM) provided the state's first record since 1997.

**Initialed Observers:** Pat Basham, Sherry Bixler, George Blanchard, David Cleary, Steve Cox, Alan Craig, Narca Moore Craig, Jon Dunn, Doug Emkalns, Gordon Ewing, Andrew Fenner,

Ralph Fisher, Bernard Foy, Dawn Foy, Lavina Fry, William Howe, Pat Insley, Gary & Carol Johnson, Eugene Lewis, James Lofton, Larry Malone, Alan Nelson, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, John Parmeter, Bruce Pataky, Tim Reeves, Christopher Rustay, Hart Schwarz, Marcy Scott, Roland Shook, Patricia Snider, John Trochet, Brad Vaughn, Nick Vaughn, Gordon Warrick, Robert Weber, Steve West, William West, S.O. Williams, James Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer.



# alaska



## Thede Tobish

2510 Foraker Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99517  
(tgt@alaska.net)

Winter 1999–2000 showed no weather pattern continuities and was simply odd. Following a mild, protracted, and relatively storm-free second half to the fall, early December had little snow accumulation and slowly dropping daily temperatures. It was not until the CBC season that cold extremes fell upon the Region. For the entire season, it was only the last twenty days of December that resembled something close to “normal” winter conditions. The remainder of the season, at least south of the Alaska Range, vacillated between all forms of extremes, most notably and often in immediate succession, rain (sometimes heavy), then snow and refreezing, and subzero to 40°F. The jet stream apparently shifted several times in the season to an extreme oblique north-south axis and shoved moist and warm North Pacific flows into the Region, fondly dubbed by meteorologists the “pineapple express.” Most surprising were the extreme cold conditions across the central and western Aleutians, which for several weeks were considerably cooler than the Gulf Coast. What affect this had on winter bird distribution was, as is the norm, difficult to assess, espe-

cially because these extreme conditions commenced after migration ended. There were near-record numbers of Gulf Coast raptors, including owls, and above-average numbers of less-than-annual waterbirds were recorded. Winter coverage in the Region continues to expand as we venture farther afield and spend more time scouting the potentially productive and milder coastal “oases.”

**Abbreviations:** ABO (*Alaska Bird Observatory*); North Gulf (*North Gulf of Alaska*); SE (*Southeast Alaska*); SC (*Southcoastal Alaska*); SW (*South-west Alaska*); UCI (*Upper Cook Inlet*); Y-K Delta (*Yukon-Kuskokwim River Deltas*).

## LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Observers in SE produced exceptional winter concentrations of Pac. Loons, notably 500+ mainly in Ward Cove near Ketchikan 18 Dec–8 Jan (SCH) and 338 around Auke Bay in Juneau 25–26 Dec (new local record, GVV). About average for SE were single Pied-billed Grebes at Ketchikan 28 Dec (AWP) and offshore at Klawock on Prince of Wales I. 10 Feb (RLS, DWS, AWP). One each of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses turned up inshore at Kodiak 15 Jan (RB) and 7 Jan (JB, RAM†). The Laysan was close to the site of last year's first local winter find, while the Black-footed was the Archipelago's first mid-winter record. Rare anywhere inshore after November, two Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels were located on the Kodiak CBC 26 Dec (DZ). Heinl continues to produce winter **Brandt's Cormorants** in the Ketchikan area, this year with a new winter record high 15 among cormorant flocks in Revillagigedo Channel south of Ketchikan 11 Feb (SCH, RLS, DWS et al.). He wonders if these Ketchikan area birds are related to the species' documented expansion into n. areas of the Queen Charlotte Islands (see Campbell et al. 1990, *Birds of British Columbia*).

Winter westward-dispersing Great Blue Herons peaked at 16+ around Kodiak's bays through the season (RAM et al.).

Casual in SE in winter were three Emperor Geese in the Sitka area 23–30 Dec (MLW ph., MET). Observers identified a **Cackling (Canada) Goose**, a casual winter visitor at best, with wintering *fulva* 8–10 Feb at Craig on Prince of Wales Island (RLS, DWS). Juneau birders distinguished a *parvipes* wintering with Canadas there 5 Feb (GVV, PS), another unique winter find. Forty-six Trumpeter Swans in one flock on Prince of Wales I.'s Big Salt L. 8 Feb was an exceptional offshore count for SE. SE's expanding winter Trumpeter populations are basically turning up at nearly all viable open-water habitats, of which there is plenty on Prince of Wales Island. The diversity of noteworthy casual waterfowl this winter was about normal, but numbers of those present were high. Highlights included a single N. Shoveler at Kodiak 20 Jan (RAM); a hardy drake Green-winged Teal that spent the season in a 20 ft. × 30 ft. patch of spring-fed creek in Anchorage (m.ob.); and unusual counts of 25+ and six Green-wingeds near Klawock, Prince of Wales Island 8 Feb+ (AWP, RLS, DWS) and at Sitka 5 Dec–Feb (MLW, MET) respectively; 11 Canvasbacks, less than annual in SE, in a group in the same Klawock estuarine lagoons 8–9 Feb (AWP, RLS, DWS); and groups of six, nine and 30+ Ring-necked Ducks at Ketchikan Dec to mid-Jan (AWP, SCH), Kodiak 26 Dec–Feb (SES, RAM), and Sitka all season (MLW, MET). About average numbers of Lesser Scaup wintered, with one in Anchorage all season (m.ob.) and a maxima of 8 at Kodiak 12 Dec (RAM) being the most notable. Single Steller's and King Eiders were again located in Seward's Resurrection Bay 30 Dec+ (RLS, et al.). Ketchikan's fish-processing plants concentrated diving ducks along the waterfront, highlighted by 1300+ Long-tailed Ducks 11 Feb (SCH), nearly twice the winter average. Good Hooded Merganser counts came in from suitable SE habitats, including peaks of seven each at Juneau 13 Dec (RJG) and Klawock on Prince of Wales I. (AWP, RLS, DWS), and eight near Ketchikan 22 Jan (MAW).

Perhaps more than any other group, raptors wintered in exceptional numbers, although observers made no indication about prey populations. Mainly at Kodiak, where accurate estimates were limited by a lack of observer coverage, grassland species were nearly ubiquitous, highlighted by at least a dozen N. Harriers 26 Dec through Feb and 15+ Rough-legged Hawks all season